

Creation Story

You can never live the same party twice and that makes me want to cry.
That makes me want to get so high that even the stars start trying it on.

Searching for Te Kore until I'm fully gone. Now we can start again.
Kick the night up from the earth, in our platform boots & let the light in.

This is what made me tender like a pork bone boiling in every situation
I could barely sit in. On the flax mat going at god for hours and hours.

On the whenua calming Ruaumoko, while the police lasso the land.
In the car outside the station, my mother dependent on his rib. I had

my hands out the window, weighing the air to see if it felt like a Saturday night
or a Sunday. Wondering if Dad would be let out of his cage in time

to see God today. I see atua today in everything. This is what made me.
Watching their descendants drop it lower than their expectations. They could never

sit in our situations which is why they can't get up and break it down like we do
& this song made from polynesian mystics, deceptive transformers delivers

us back to when we were down on ourselves doing ugly things. Rolling
our eyes at the singing. Avoiding the sun. Just as our mothers had done

when their mothers spent generations powdering themselves pretty
in the image of the father, ignoring both the mother and the whenua in her.

I should have held my fist up then, a palmful of protest, but that's why I
keep my hands up, hands up in the air now. And this fresh set of fire reminds me

of how Nanny Pearl had nails so long it used to freak me out and now
I'm like wtf was I even on about and every time I see my nail tech

it's an homage and an apology for every time I didn't listen, bit the apple
and felt abandoned, and then abandoned me and me and me. But here we are now.

Created. On fire like Mahuika. This is what made me. Trying to weave
perfect sentences, forming mountains I don't have the answers for.

I'd ask my ancestors but I'm not sure they know. All we have ever done
is our best with the materials on hand; heat, water, soil. A smattering of words

and this is what made me drag myself upwards from the ocean like Pania.
Fresh-faced and curious. This is what made me worshipful & marvelous, able to

stand upright and some of that time, I was dancing. This is what made me.
A duplicate of Hineahuone, our blood of red sand. No matter how hard

we sculpt ourselves, in the end we always collapse back and in the meantime,
it is my friends who make me bow. Get on my hands and knees for,

mop their drink up from the floor, kiss their beautiful ankles.
My god you are so talented, embodied and creative. This is what

made me let down my ancestral knot, let my hips rock with all the rhythm
of the wind, this party beating and cultured in the space between

the sky and the land. Get high while you can. You have traveled
very far. I saw you coming in my mind born from the last burst star.

Wayfinders

My ancestors knew the exact distance between the stars
and still had the desire to risk it all anyway. Voyaging
to the horizon where this world meets the next, feeling
for the boundary, and pushing the sky out even further.

I think about this when my want keeps wanting yours
when I look up at the sky
and pick the exact same star you are standing under.

I feel us like Te Kore, compass against my chest,
vibrating with potential and in the distance;

the crackle of chaos, the universe being ripped apart
like a bag of chips, starving, animal, schoolboy, wild
or could be if we were dumb
and godlike enough to drag ourselves into light

Over cocktails at Ascot, I whisper my premonitions to Miriama,
goddess of the sea, who reminds me that every hopeful star
skimmed across oceans causes ripples and the thing about water is
you can never quite predict what kind of reaction you will get.

Perhaps it will lie down flat like a lover and give you highways
to run your hands over or
it might assume the shape of tsunami, taniwha you can't prepare for.

So think about which wishes you wish to rip from the sky
before you throw them burning wide into the land of the living.
Just because you are made of that brave waging stock
doesn't mean you should do, or take anything you want.

I think about this when my want keeps wanting yours
when I think I can cheat the distance

conjure you to me through the cables that map the seafloor.

We stand on different sides of many oceans
and here
at the center of my ancestor's creation is where I belong

but every now and then I hope you think of me
on the beach with my girlfriends
dripping in bone, stone and gold

your waves crashing quietly on my shores
my eyes on our horizon, searching for your birds.

Can I Still Come Crash at Yours?

We were only girls then iti iti iti but already we were pretty little putiputi growing high amongst the weeds and already we had trained our eyes to pick them out.

You know da ones. Air Force 1s, slacker jeans, jaw of the whale, bandanna bunny tails. We wanted them to pick us too. Spent afternoons in our classrooms praying for them to come thru and satirise themselves. Press their noses against the glass. Make the teacher racist and the eggs laugh. Yeah

we loved those flash hulking diamonds, the best of a bad bunch who, despite the purple fruit punches, the sunny nights, the salt-and-peppered eyes, the police hospitality and the Māori brutality, the AI reality, ripped bodies and ripped copies of Kanye West my bro, my dark twisted fantasy, an iPod with one working headphone, no working dad at home, who were so haati and ngāti, such wholesome wonderful liars, who honestly seemed to glow

like those plastic stick-on stars which in the daylight look like 2-dollar shops and bad taste, but in the dark, on the first beds we ever made for men just like our mothers, shoulder to shoulder beneath their second-hand Star Wars covers, palms over their hei matau, they shone almost like the real thing and we were astrologers, drawing dot to dots and making connections where there weren't any. Casting our ships full of wish into the sky.

Our eyes rimmed in raxxed Maybelline would widen and soften and rage and welcome, just like the ocean. We felt watery with understanding that we were yet to understand but we had vague notions, and enjoyed going through the motions of boiling pork bones and vermicelli and braiding or shaving their heads on the stoop during the buzzcut season. Swooping in on their soft babyboi locks 4 matching heart-shaped lockets and our love spells. Chanting

with our hands across our hearts that we did not hope to die but hoped to live, the simple life, of endless American reality TV shows and a couple of chubby kids cos we were down to be wifeys, rolling up and refreshing the ashtrays and

the bottles, practised at handling them gently like lovers on a laminated table.
So we exchanged vows, not to them but to each other

that every day we would wake up and put our makeup on just to watch them
play GTA and exclaim proudly This is how bad girls do it! From Cape Reinga to
the deep blue south! Marry up and spend our days just swanning on the couch.
Real Fitzgerald type shit. Ka mau te wehi. So,

like very good girls we prioritised those boys in their fake Gucci sweatshirts,
so genuine, so brainless, we would tell each other we loved them only faintly
aware it wasn't true and on the nights we all crashed together marae stylez
gazing up at the same stickered roof I turned to you. The empty Tui winding
down on the floor, the clock stuck on midnight. Your eyes dilating like big
twin moons. I pass you the smoke. You fill up the room.

Tohunga

Visionary like my ancestors I / saw a sky of whales / a pale people / like my ancestors I / inhaled the bible / swallowed the rifle like / an 8 inch cock / whateva. / Like Donna Summer I swirled / in a floor length dress / said I love to love / I love to fuck / but just like my ancestors knew / to you I was a savage wild jasmine / a\$\$ out / blacked out / with dollar signs / feline like a bengal tiger and it's true / that anyone on their hands and knees / is essentially a praying animal.

Radical like my ancestors I / saw the flower child / the wasted liberals / and my prehistoric / flare wearing prince / and like my ancestors I / kissed and kissed and kissed / and tasted / an entire lifetime of taking advantage and / being aware of it. / So at least / when my dress hits the floor / like molting bark / your eyes follow / and I can interpret / your fixation as shame. / Are you sorry? / And what does that say about me / if I think even a suggestion / of an apology is sexy? So like / my ancestors I / sculpt you from the dirt until you rise I / make you meet my eye / then suck you all up / with a slurp like a kina. / That's Te Hei Mauri Ora. / Just like Papatuanuku / I breathe life / which is why my mother tongue spits praises despite / it's history of whippings / I say

good on you babe. / You got what you wanted. / The juicy earth / the factoryed women / the rivers / the mountains / all bowing for you. / I'm proud of you / the way you erected / monuments in your image / so foreign so / violently unimagined / just like my ancestors I / couldn't even have even dreamed it. / Pou after pou / of grey and glass / cracking the sky and the sky / was full of whales. / Wow I say / good on you babe / then I spread / my hair all over the hotel pillow / because I love a winner. And you / hit the jackpot with me / with all us silly girls / for believing you were god / for as long as we did. / But now /

the atmosphere is betraying you / and you are reddening in places / where I can bare it. / A warrior / like my ancestors I survived / annihilation. And the awa / that run beneath my skin / have not been lapped dry / just yet / and you can see it all / the unpanned gold / the wild pounamu / the thrashing tuna / family jewels / you can never have / taonga / you can never taste / forbidden fruits / reserved for me / are you afraid again? / like you were of Eve? / the world / is getting unbearably hot / but so am I / and so is she.

Our Nan Lets Us Smoke Inside

but only when we drink wine and play cards
on the kitchen table. I feel glamorous
when I drop my ash into the pāua shell in the middle.

Our nan wears black leather pumps
and dries wishbones from chicken carcasses
in an empty margarine container on top of the fridge.

She's not my real nan
but I've always wished she was.
I wished I was born with her

blood in my veins, her dark
Waikato DNA, high cheekbones
and heavy wet eyes just like my sister.

Our nan met her late husband
in the late sixties. She was dressed
in a little mod dress, her black hair flipped.

He was a cowboy with mutton chops and
tan-lined legs and short cream shorts, who rode off
to work every morning with a commercial digger for a horse but—

he'd pick us up in his station wagon on Sundays.

Johnny Cash and his metronome voice

making us fall asleep against the dusty windows so we would stop

for a Filet-O-Fish and a strawberry milkshake

for lunch and dinner. But he always picked

my sister up more.

At his funeral,

us girls carried the mismatched flowers

behind our brothers in black sunglasses.

At the service,

we all got up and sang *I hope you are dancing in the sky*

but it was painful and flat and sounded like coughing.

During the burial,

nobody exhaled a word as my nan ashed out

a half-sucked cigarette in the fresh sour soil.

In the carpark,

we all smoked back tears with another cigarette pacifier

like babies numbed on a nicotine nipple.

Hawaiki

My mother, tired
from pregnancy and being
alive, named her last son
Hawaiki
like the paradise.

Some people say
it is where we go
when we die.

They say we dive
straight off the edge
of Cape Reinga and into
the point where the sky
hangs so heavy with spirits
that it touches the sea.

Other people say
that is where we were
before we came here
by waka, or whale, or perhaps

that was where we were
before there was anything at all

where we meant something
before we discovered

like Eve
God's forbidden fruit
in the shape of an I.

I think
it must be a womb
where everything is born
and returns to.

Life and death
are the colour red.

They are the colour
of a cosmic heartbeat
rising on his fresh baby flesh

pinched between fingers and kissed.